

As Secretary, Don Evans' first mission will be to promote U.S. exports. With a record trade deficit of more than \$300 billion last year, I can think of few tasks more urgent than this one. As he takes on this responsibility, I urge him to remember the critical role that small businesses and agriculture play in our export successes and not concentrate solely on the role of the largest corporations. We also cannot forget the other side of the ledger. Mr. Evans will also be charged with enforcing our trade laws, another vital task to ensure that U.S. farmers and businesses are not competing against unfair imports.

I am also very concerned about the so-called digital divide in the development of the communications infrastructure and the new e-economy. As Senator for one of the most rural states in the nation, it is critically important to me that our next Secretary aggressively work to close this digital divide to make sure rural North Dakotans get full access to the benefits of information technology.

Finally, I would note that the Department of Commerce is responsible for collecting a range of statistics on our population and economy that are critical to informing the choices that we, as elected officials must make. The accuracy and accessibility of this data are essential to making the right choices for America's future.

In short, Don Evans faces a host of challenges. I am confident that he will approach them with the same vigor and success with which he ran the Bush campaign, and I look forward to working with him in the months and years ahead.

NOMINATION OF ANN VENEMAN

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I look forward to working with Ann Veneman as Secretary of Agriculture. For North Dakota, there is no Cabinet position more important than this one.

American agriculture faces a serious crisis that threatens the economic livelihood of North Dakota farmers and rural communities. Our next Secretary of Agriculture faces the challenge and responsibility of coming up with a new farm policy that addresses this crisis as well as the competitive challenges we face from overseas. Ms. Veneman has a long record on agricultural issues and will bring a depth of experience and commitment to the leadership of the Department of Agriculture.

However, I must say her track record causes me some concern. Ms. Veneman was a cheerleader for the failed Freedom to Farm policy that has been such a disaster for North Dakota farmers. In fact, we've had to write economic disaster bills in each of the last three years to deal with the consequences of that disastrous legislation. Beyond that, Ms. Veneman was heavily involved in negotiating the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, which was another disaster for North Dakota. Nevertheless, I wish her well, and I'll do everything I can to work with her to change these policies.

I think the first priority must be to rewrite the current federal farm policy. This is not working and it's very clear to everyone that it's not working. Prices are at record lows. Farmers are leaving the land. And rural main street businesses are suffering.

Next, we must re-invigorate our agricultural trade policy. We've got to be engaged in world trade but it's got to be on a fair, competitive basis. I think we've got to level the playing field with our major competitors—the Europeans—who are outspending us 10 to one in terms of providing support for their producers. Leveling the playing field is one of my highest priorities, so we get farm income up and so our farmers have a fair chance to succeed.

As a senior member of the Agriculture Committee, I look forward to working with Ms. Veneman as we take on these challenges.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

THE PASSING OF JOHN C. "JACK" RENNIE

• Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I speak today to pay tribute to the life of one of Massachusetts most prominent citizens and small business advocates, John C. "Jack" Rennie, who passed away last Monday, January 15th, at the age of 63. Jack was truly an extraordinary figure who changed the way American business looked at education, and the way education worked in Massachusetts.

Born in Boston in May of 1937, Jack attended and graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy and Harvard School of Business. He later went on to earn a master's degree from Northeastern University.

Using the skills he learned while serving in the Navy as a test pilot, and putting his business education and experience to good use, he founded Pacer Systems in 1968. Pacer Systems provided systems integration and product services for the Department of Defense (DoD). Pacer was later to become AverStar and expand its systems integration work beyond DoD to other Federal agencies. Jack served as Vice Chairman of AverStar from 1998 until his retirement in June of last year.

His entrepreneurial spirit was not limited to his own company. In the mid-1970s, Jack was the driving force behind the creation of National Small Business United (NSBU), the nation's oldest bipartisan trade association for small businesses. In the early 1980s, Jack served as the President of the Small Business Association of New England (SBANE), and in 1983, he led the first all small business trade mission to the People's Republic of China. In 1983, he was also named the Small Business Person of the Year for Massachusetts and New England by then President Ronald Reagan.

But despite all of these noteworthy accomplishments, Jack's most lasting

achievements came in the area of education reform.

As a business leader and entrepreneur, Jack was alarmed at the problems facing the public education system in Massachusetts and the nation. He knew that the businesses of tomorrow would demand a higher caliber of education from its employees, and that education was an integral part of America's future prosperity.

Not one to sit on the sidelines, Jack combined his business expertise with his natural leadership abilities to found the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education in 1988, which successfully led a five-year effort to reform Massachusetts' K-12 education system. His organization's 1991 report, "Every Child a Winner," was the impetus for the Massachusetts Education and Reform Act in 1993. This legislation led to new state-wide testing and accountability standards, as well as increased funding for education.

Prominent small businessman, and executive, Navy veteran, education reformer and community leader, Jack Rennie's passing leaves a void few people are qualified to fill, and even fewer would attempt to try. On behalf of the citizens of Massachusetts, I would like to express our sincere condolences to Jack's family and friends. •

RECOGNIZING FRANK HEMINGWAY

• Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, recently Frank Hemingway came to Washington, D.C. to be a part of the 2001 Inaugural activities. A student from Onate High School in Las Cruces, New Mexico, he was the winner of the Character Counts Task Force Contest for area high school students. To win this contest, Mr. Hemingway was required to write an essay dealing with his experience with one of the Pillars of Character Counts.

Character Counts is a grassroots effort in New Mexico and on the national front. The Character Counts initiative strives to promote, in all aspects of American life, six basic pillars of good character: Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, and Citizenship. I have actively worked to support New Mexico schools and communities that have embraced this initiative.

Mr. Hemingway chose to write his on the Responsibility Pillar, and how being responsible has changed his life. I commend Frank for his smart choices and hard word.

Mr. President, I ask that his essay be printed in the RECORD following my remarks.

The material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.

HOW RESPONSIBILITY CHANGED MY LIFE

(By Frank Hemingway)

"Hey bud! want to go to the movies tonight? I've got some girls from across town going—I know I can get you a date."

"No, maybe later," I answered to a typical offer from one of my closest friends, "It's a school night and I've got a report that I need